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ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

The Wilmington Light Infantry,

—ON THEIR—

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY,

MAY 20th, 1877,

—BY—

EDWARD CANTWELL.

Published by P. HEINSBERGER.

WILMINGTON, N. C.:
S. G. HALL, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER,
1877.



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9th Nov 1878
with the highest regard
and best wishes

John A. Cantwell
Apr 1879

WITH THE HIGHEST REGARD
AND BEST WISHES
FOR THIER PROSPERITY AND SUCCESS,
I DEDICATE THIS ORATION
TO THE
HISTORICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY,
OF WILMINGTON, N. C.
EDWARD CANTWELL.

THE WILMINGTON LIGHT INFANTRY.*

This being the anniversary of the day when a bold and brave band of patriotic North Carolinians assembled one hundred and two years ago in the county of old Mecklenburg to declare against the oppression of the mother country, and to proclaim to the world their willingness to throw off the yoke, and in doing so pledged themselves to defend their principles with their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor, it is but fitting that such a glorious day in the history of our dear old mother state should be kept alive and perpetuated by succeeding generations for all time to come. It was with this view, no doubt, that the original members of Wilmington Light Infantry first organized this gallant company, twenty-four years ago, on the 20th day of May, 1853. The not uneventful history of this splendid company has been well and truly told in the fine address here published by the Hon. Edward Cantwell, who was the first officer that ever commanded it. Many there are who participated in that first organization whose familiar faces have long since passed from us and many there are who doffed the handsome blue uniform to don the glorious gray and marched out with buoyant hopes and lofty aspirations, who, now alas, "sleep their last sleep, and have fought their last battle."

But there are still some of the old veterans left to tell the tale of woe, of carnage, and of slaughter, of brilliant victories and disastrous retreats, of hardships and privations, without

* An oration delivered at the Opera House, Wilmington, N. C., before the military and civil organizations of that city, on the 20th of May, 1877, that being the anniversary of the Wilmington Light Infantry Company.

number, of sufferings that no human tongue can express or portray. All of which were borne with a fortitude and courage unsurpassed by soldiers in any land at any time.

The fine looking Cape Fear Light Artillery Company, under command of Capt. Flanner, headed the procession to-day, preceded by the drum corps of the Wilmington Light Infantry. Next to the Artillery Company came the Veteran Corps of the Wilmington Light Infantry, numbering some twenty odd men under command of Col. Wm. L. DeRosset, who was their last captain prior to the war. The soldierly bearing of these old veterans attracted much attention and was the occasion of much favorable comment from the citizens generally. The gray caps they wore added very much to their military appearance, but their good marching was the chief cause of the complimentary remarks that were made.

At the Dawson Bank, on Front street, the Produce Exchange filed into the procession and at the corner of Front and Princess the column was joined by the old Mexican veterans carrying the flag which was planted on the heights of the National Bridge, Mexico, on the 12th day of August, 1847, by Lieutenant Edward Cantwell, of the 12th Regt. U. S. Infantry.

At the Northwest corner of Princess and Front, the Chamber of Commerce joined in the procession and further on up Princess, the Historical and Scientific Society took the place in the line which had been assigned them. The whole column under command of Maj. M. P. Taylor, with Lieut. N. H. Sprunt, of the W. L. I., acting as Adjutant, then moved on up Princess street to the Opera House. Arriving there a halt was made, the military came to a front and presented arms, when the civil organizations passed on up in front of the line and preceded the military into the building. The military passed in and brought up the rear.

The Opera House, which is very spacious, was well filled, many ladies and gentlemen having assembled there before the procession arrived, availing themselves of the opportunity to secure good seats.

The orator of the day, Hon. Edward Cantwell, the Chaplain, Rev. Mr. Patterson, the Choir consisting of Messrs. Hargrave, Metts, Robinson and Northrop, together with the Committee of Arrangements and the reader of the Mecklenburg Declaration took seats on the stage. Capt. Armand L. DeRosset, Master of Ceremonies, then introduced Rev. Dr. Patterson, Chaplain of the Wilmington Light Infantry, who opened the ceremonies with prayer, after which Capt. DeRosset read from the programme that the "Old North State" would be sung by the Choir, Prof. VanLaer as Musical Director, at the piano. At the close of the last verse the audience rose to their feet and joined in the chorus. Amid the utmost enthusiasm, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, Mr. Joseph Cronly read the Mecklenburg Declaration in a clear, distinct and pleasant manner, after which Capt. DeRosset, in a very graceful manner, introduced Judge Cantwell, who spoke as follows :

ORATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—I thank you for this kind and cordial greeting, and that I may not be supposed insensible to such a compliment from a Wilmington audience, you will permit me to say, that my subject this afternoon depends so much on my own recollections, that I feel that I should not detain you with acknowledgments of a merely personal character.

The study of our North Carolina history is one of the most interesting and profitable employments in which North Carolinians can engage. I am aware of the embarrassments by which you are at present surrounded, and the difficulty you find of fixing your attention upon matters not connected with business, but you will permit me to say that no people will long be free, who are unacquainted with the virtues of their

ancestors or insensible to the sacrifices liberty requires: who are not constantly inspired with a vehement rage, the infirmity of noble minds; which counts life as valueless, without just and equal laws and a free government. So long, gentlemen, as civil liberty shall endure, this day, the 20th of May, will be a sacred and a holy day in North Carolina.

One hundred and two years ago, thirteen and a half months before the now celebrated Declaration of the Fourth day of July, 1776, at Philadelphia, the Scotch-Irish settled in the western part of North Carolina, assembled at Charlotte Court House, Mecklenburg, surrounded by their wives and mothers and irritated by the arbitrary proceedings of the English Governor, who on the night of the 24th of April had fled from Newbern to Fort Johnston, having previously dissolved or attempted to dissolve their local legislature. Then came the news of the conflict at Lexington, on the 19th of April. News traveled slowly in those days; the proclamation of the British King, declaring the Massachusetts rebels and all who sympathized with them, out of his protection, was well calculated to rouse their apprehensions of the future. Inspired moreover by the patriotic appeals of their leading men; William Kennon, the lawyer, Ephraim Brevard, their doctor, and Hezekiah Balch, their pastor, these men at the Court House cried out unanimously, as if with one voice, "Let us have done with this nonsense, let us be independent. Yes, let us declare independence and defend it with our fortunes and our lives."

They called Abraham Alexander, the school master, to the chair. Doctor Brevard read them some resolutions he had drawn up for some friends at a meeting held at Queen's Museum, Charlotte, a few days previously. These resolutions were referred to a committee consisting of the doctor himself, Mr. Kennon and the Rev. H. J. Balch, and the committee retired for consultation. The rest remained in the Court House until midnight of that day and all the next until high noon. The question in debate was Independence. The excitement continually increased until at last every man's

mind being fully made up, and Brevard's resolutions amended and revised by the committee thoroughly understood, the question upon them was put by the chairman in the midst of a profound stillness, made solemn, by the magnitude of the issues it presented and the character of the men by whom those issues were to be resolved. "Are you all agreed to these resolutions," he asked. The response was an universal aye. It was then moved that the resolutions should be read at the Court House door, and proclamation being made, Colonel Thos. Polk, from the steps of the Court House read then to a listening and approving auditory, the now famous resolutions known as the Mecklenburg Declaration; they formally proclaimed Independence of the British Crown; abjured allegiance to the English Government, and established in North Carolina a separate and self-existing political community. The authors of those resolutions were the descendants of a people who in Scotland and Ireland had for centuries been engaged in the same struggle they that day inaugurated in America. The language of these resolutions was their habitual form of speech, whenever aroused by similar occasions. These were the people who settled our western villages. They were hereditary opponents of royal misrule. *Blood will tell!* The men came from generations of Scotch and Irish rebels. They went to Charlotte that day with their mothers and wives; and these wives and mothers came from women who fought side by side with the defenders of Limerick and Derry. There they stood in the imminent breach with such weapons as they could snatch from the bodies of the slain, and there they won triumphs which illumine the pages of history, and shed such radiance on posterity, we need no other lamp to light us to glory or the grave. Originally settled in Delaware and passing through Pennsylvania and Virginia, from the head springs of the Opequon and Cub Creek in that State, they emigrated to North Carolina between 1736 and 1750. Scattering themselves along the banks of the Hico, the Eno and the Haw, they built their rude cabins of fragrant cedars and pine. The

blue smoke dotting the verdant landscape here and there marked their advance westward through the wilderness. At night they made their evening prayer, and laid them down between their bibles and their rifles; lulled to sleep and waked to labor by the tinkling floods of the Yadkin and the Catawba.

* * Driven from their homes across the deep,
 Founded a state that grew so strong and grand,
 That in their day its shadow did expand,
 And climb the tryant's throne! Did History bind
 Their glory round her brow, until her hand
 Weary with search, on record failed to find
 Minds tempered with such power to benefit their kind?

And while they sleep, she tells their deeds sublime,
 The everlasting base from which shall spring
 New empires, like their own, till every clime
 Shall bless the breeze that bears the eagle's wing.
 And tongues in every language learn to sing
 Freedom's sweet song. * * *

The 20th of May is also the anniversary of our North Carolina secession in 1861. After exhausting every other means of redress we, this day sixteen years ago, solemnly declared the compact broken which was established in 1789. The Union had been dissolved by others, and thereupon we immediately attempted to re-establish another in its place and failed.

One day history will do justice to this movement of a Union loving people.

The 20th of May is also the anniversary of the Historical and Scientific Society, of this city.

Gentlemen, we are glad to see you here to-day. We congratulate you upon your successful efforts to organize the scholars and gentlemen of Wilmington into a society which has already acquired reputation at home and abroad.

The Cape Fear Light Artillery also celebrate to-day, their anniversary. We welcome too, around the altar of Mecklenburg, the Produce Exchange, the surviving veterans of the Mexican war, the Cornet Concert Club and the young cadets of the Whiting Rifles. You, young gentlemen, unite Mecklenburg and Fort Fisher; your company is the link between

proud memories and growing hopes. *O dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.* You perpetuate the name of a man* who, perished in the defence of North Carolina, and in obedience to her laws. Let us hope the day will come when North Carolina shall lovingly rescue his remains and enclose them in her own bosom. We know the day is not far distant when the German Volunteers will meet us here again. Fellow Citizens: These organizations are necessary to the development of the noble qualities among us. The manly virtues never flourish where military prowess is disregarded and when chivalry shall cease to be known among men, gentleness and refinement will disappear among women. I look upon the revival of the military spirit and the organization of our militia, which will immediately follow it, as the most auspicious signs of a lasting peace and the best hope of a true reconciliation. The prompt withdrawal of the army from its post, so called, at Raleigh, the evacuation of the State Houses at Columbia and New Orleans, indicate the purpose of President Hayes to restore the supremacy of the civil power, to confine the use of the army to our foreign defence; absolute reliance on the protection of the whole people for the maintenance of order here, the restoration of the South to its fair and equal apportionment of federal patronage and control, and its equality in the Union. These are the legitimate objects of all political combinations, and for these acts and purposes, the President is entitled to the gratitude and respect of every American citizen.

Gentlemen of the Wilmington Light Infantry, you have the honor to be the first military organization to adopt the 20th of May as an anniversary. Your first meeting was called at the Court House, in January 1853. The original certificate of your enrollment by virtue of an act of the Legislature, passed in 1849, is dated the 22d of February. This certificate is equivalent to a special charter, and renders one unnecessary. From the original founders the company selected the following

* Gen. W. H. C. Whiting, died in the hospital, New York, of wounds received at Fort Fisher, N. C.

officers, viz.: Washington C. Fergus, First Lieut.; R. R. Bowden, Second Lieut.; W. A. M. VanBokkelen, Third Lieut.; Geo. E. Pritchett, Ensign. Edward Cantwell was elected the first captain of the company.

The following were the original founders of the company: Theodore Ambrose, Edward N. Atkins, J. Frank Bishop, James A. Burch, Dickson Brown, Robert R. Bowden, Thomas N. Bishop, Joseph L. Barlow, Archibald N. Burch, Samuel H. Bingham, William N. Bowden, Christopher Burns, Edward Cantwell, John L. Cantwell, Edward Cason, Lill. Corbin, Jesse W. Dixey, Robert H. Drysdale, Louis B. Erambert, Wash. C. Fergus, Joseph M. Foy, W. H. Hardee, Cambyeses Hunter, Joseph S. Ives, Thomas H. Johnson, Oliver Kelly, William H. King, John R. London, John D. Love, William N. Lewis, Frederick I. Moore, Alexander E. Mott, Charles W. Morris, Charles D. Myers, William M. Murrill, J. R. Murray, Andrew J. Mashburne, William H. Northrop, Samuel G. Northrop, Joseph H. Neff, John J. Poisson, James T. Petteway, George E. Pritchett, Oscar G. Parsley, Jr., William H. Petteway, Samuel W. Roberts, Edward Ryan, William L. Robinson, Henry Savage, Samuel A. Swann, William H. Shaw, William B. Shaw, William N. Swann, Richard H. Selby, Robert C. Strong, Christopher W. Styron, Hiram B. Sholar, Henry Sholar, John Sholar, William H. Turlington, Wash. Taylor, J. C. Thomas, William R. Utley, John R. Utley, William A. M. VanBokkelen, George O. Van-Amringe, Jr., William A. Wilson, Louis H. Wilson, William A. Walker, William L. White, William E. Wright, John S. Wilson, Walter S. Williamson, David G. White and Hardy B. Willis.

Your first uniform was green trimmed with orange cloth and gold, officers and men wore white plumes, trimmed with green. The first and second platoon were divided into several squads, and each in charge of an officer. Your first drills were had at Wells' old carriage shop, on the corner of Seventh and Market streets. I hope to

be pardoned for saying that no company ever started into existence under more favorable auspices. I doubt indeed if there existed in America, a more high-toned, select and chivalrous organization. I mean no empty compliment to the ladies of Wilmington when I declare however that its success is mainly due to them, and I believe their active sympathy and cordial co-operation to be still necessary. For nearly a quarter of a century, their influence has been constantly observable. During this period events have occurred which have not been surpassed in magnitude by any in history. Conspicuous among the actors in them the Wilmington Light Infantry has always borne a distinguished part. Indeed, the history of this particular company is the history of Wilmington and North Carolina.

To some extent, also, it has been the history of the romantic Confederacy of which this State was once an active member. Inspired at first by the spirit awakened upon a foreign soil, in the campaigns of Scott and Taylor, your laurels were reaped in the harvest of service at home; beneath the flag of 1853 and around it; beneath the tears and glances of those who presented it; your sweethearts and wives; amidst clashing thunders which proclaimed the presence of an enemy near where "your thoughtful evening fires were wont to glow on their bright and happy faces."

In the year 1853, the militia of the United States was armed only with flint and steel muskets. Percussion guns were rarely seen except in the regular army. It became necessary to secure a sufficient number of the new weapons to arm the company. How to do this, when there were none issued to the State, was the problem, but Mr. Jefferson Davis was Secretary of War, and it was understood there were a few in the Arsenal at Fayetteville. It was of course useless to apply for them in the usual way through the Governor, and hence some other base of operations had to be selected. Under these circumstances the company resorted to a stratagem; they improvised a *ruse de guerre* which I will now endeavor

to relate for your amusement. A meeting was called at which the name of Mr. Davis, the Secretary of War, was offered for admission as a member of the company; he was of course unanimously elected. By another resolution the captain was authorised to issue to Mr. Davis a formal leave of absence during his term of office as Secretary of War, and to exempt him from all fines for non-attendance on company and squad drills. By the third resolution a committee was appointed to inform Mr. Davis of these proceedings, solicit the honor of his acceptance and request his influence at Washington in obtaining seventy guns and equipments in time for the ceremonies of the great and glorious anniversary of American Independence. The Fourth of July, 1853, was celebrated in Wilmington with unusual spirit. A joint committee was appointed, consisting of Dr. W. W. Harriss acting for the town authorities, Capt. Jacob Wessel for the German Volunteers and the captain of the Wilmington Light Infantry for that body. Robt. H. Cowan, Esq., accepted the position of orator.

Just a few days before the Fourth a letter was received from Mr. Davis cordially accepting these compliments. In the most graceful and patriotic terms; he thanked the captain especially for the indulgence and leave of absence extended him from "squad drills" during the time he was acting as Secretary of War for the United States. Mr. Davis closed his letter with the information that he found no difficulty in persuading the Secretary of War into a compliance with the wishes of the company. Orders, he said had already been issued for the delivery of the guns and equipments. In fact the next day, they arrived by special express from Fayetteville, to the wonderment and delight of the entire community.

Will you pardon me for adding that ten years afterwards the captain, having become a field officer of the Confederate States, was admitted to the presence of the President: Mr. Davis received the colonel with a gracious smile, but addressing him as "captain" requested him to be seated for a moment. After a while he turned to him and said, "Well, captain,

and now what can I do for you?" That there should be no misunderstanding or mistake on the "captain's" part, after granting the request for which the colonel asked he said: "Well, captain, what has become of the squad drills and our company; I mean the Wilmington Light Infantry?" The captain felt some pride in being able to tell Mr. Davis, the President, that his squad and the company were both actively engaged in the service of the Confederacy, and some sixty-five of them, were commissioned officers in the army.

In November, 1853, the company was honored by the presentation to them of their first flag from the ladies of Wilmington. The ceremony took place on the steps of the Cape Fear Bank and was witnessed by a large and brilliant concourse. Among the strangers present was the late Abram W. Venable. Col. Robert Strange, alas! that he is not with us to-day, delivered the speech.

At dinner the company sat down to a sumptuous entertainment, prepared by Wood & Vincent at the Carolina Hotel. Speeches were made by Messrs. Robt. H. Cowan, Robt. Strange, Samuel J. Person, Eli Hall and others. Alas! these men are no longer among us to receive the evidences we would so gladly offer them of the public respect and our individual devotion. They have passed away for ever. "Like the bubbles that swim on the breakers brim, and break on the lips while meeting."

The first captain was succeeded in 1854, by Edward Savage, Esq., one of the honorary members of the company. Capt. Savage resigned in May, and was succeeded by First Lieut. Washington C. Fergus. He resigned in May, 1855. and was succeeded by John L. Cantwell, Esq. Capt. John Cantwell resigned in July, and William L. DeRosset became the fifth on the list of captains. Capt. DeRosset resigned in 1857, and was succeeded by Ed. D. Hall. Capt. Hall resigned in May, 1860, and Capt. DeRosset was again elected to the command which he retained until May, 1861, when

being appointed Major of the 3d Infantry, he was succeeded by Robt. B. McRae.

For seven years prior to the war, with the exception of an occasional tour of duty as fire guard, the operations of the Light Infantry were confined to social and festive occasions; composed of the young cadets of the town, carefully culled from the best families, its history was an uninterrupted festivity. It, occasionally disorder arose, at the sight of the flag presented by the ladies, it immediately disappeared. In March, 1856, the company presented Capt. DeRosset with a massive silver pitcher and salver, in testimony of their appreciation of him as a commander, his character as a gentleman and his lofty bearing as a soldier. Mr. Chas. D. Myers, one of the founders of the company, was the spokesman on that occasion. The 20th of May, 1856, was enlivened by the visit and presence of the "Oak City Guards," of Raleigh, and the Fayetteville Light Infantry. Besides the usual festivities, songs, parades and dancing, there was a sharp competition for a prize and target firing. The day closed with a dinner at Browne's Hotel and a grand excursion to Fort Caswell and Bald Head. The visit of the Oak City Guards was returned next year, 1857. Early in the bonny month of May, the company, under command of Capt. DeRosset, and a full band of music, took the boat for Raleigh *via* Fayetteville. Upon their arrival at the capital of the State they were met by the Oak City Guards, Capt. Harrison, and the Raleigh Cadets, and escorted to the reception ground, in front of the residence of Dr. F. J. Haywood.

The following answered to roll call on this occasion: W. L. DeRosset, Captain; L. B. Erambert, First Lieut.; J. R. Loudon, Second Lieut.; A. E. Wright, Surgeon; John J. Poisson, Ensign; A. M. Waddell, Quarter Master. Sergeants: C. D. Myers, G. E. Pritchett and J. D. McPeake. J. C. McIlhenny, Color Bearer. Corporals: Latta, Wright, Savage, Davis, Daniel and Burr. Privates: Cassidey, Cazaux, Cumming, Curtis, Darby, Flanner, Haller, Hyde, Ivey, Mendenhall,

Moore, McDuffie, McKoy, McRae, M. Quince, R. Quince, Roberts, Shaw, Smith, Swann and White.

Business that day in Raleigh was entirely suspended. The streets presented a holiday appearance; amidst the booming of cannon, the cheers of the assembled multitude, and a vast concourse of ladies and gentlemen, His Excellency, Thomas Bragg, Governor of North Carolina, welcomed them to the hospitalities of the city and the state. "No duty," he said, "could his fellow-citizens have asked him to perform, which would be undertaken with more alacrity. "Soldiers," said he, "you come to us from our chief commercial town. We have heard of the industry, the enterprise, the intelligence of your people. Should your country ever call you to avenge her wrongs, or protect her rights, I have heard too much of your gallantry to believe that one of you could be found who is not willing and ready at the first tap of the drum to fall into ranks and march where duty called."

Alfred Moore Waddell, a member of the corps, replied to the Governor in a fervid and eloquent speech. (See Appendix.)

The company then proceeded to the Executive Mansion, where they were received and hospitably entertained by the accomplished wife of the Chief Magistrate. For two days the city was given up to festivities and the rest of their visit was a perfect ovation. They were invited to the hospitalities of the leading citizens, and, finally, found themselves captured and captive, but willing prisoners to the garrison at St. Mary's. They found their new percussion guns no better defence against such arms as were there arrayed, than the old flint and steel had proved themselves. Among the happiest incidents of this visit was the speech of the late venerable rector, the Rev. Dr. Smedes. The weather was balmy and beautiful. The sun wore his brightest smile and the gladdened earth looked up to him with joy. The last day at Raleigh was devoted to target firing. Anthony D. Cazaux, Esq., a member of the company, won the highest prize and distinction. It was delivered to him in the House

of Commons by ex-Governor Manly. All the ladies of the city were there gazing on the victor; so was Senator Badger, Jno. H. Bryan, and Sion H. Rogers, with other distinguished Carolinians. My impression is that private Cazaux did not finish the speech he prepared for that occasion. He had to face a battery only less kindling than that the same veteran tries to face to-day, one which appalls the true soldier more than grape and canister. Gov. Manly, however, said for him: "If you want the battles of your country fought and won; your railroads built, and rivers opened, or the bull's eye of the target shot out, these are the boys to do it."

One of the flags of the company, held by Ensign J. C. McIlhenny, on that occasion, is carried to-day by Wm. Martin, a survivor of the 12th Infantry of the U. S. Army in the war with Mexico.

In May, 1857; the Wilmington Light Infantry, under the special appointment of the Governor of the State, proceeded to Weldon with their tents and camp equipage and became the special escort of President Buchanan, who was then on a visit to the University at Chapel Hill. This service was acknowledged by Gov. Ellis, in a letter dated 25th of June, 1859, in terms of the warmest commendation. "I shall ever feel grateful to the Wilmington Light Infantry," said he, "for the important aid they rendered me on this occasion and I will know on whom to call when gallantry, military skill and discipline are required by the State." President Buchanan's acknowledgments were even more flattering. On taking leave of his escort he said: "I have not met in the United States, a company of gentlemen more correct in their conduct, more exact in their discipline, or more deserving of the grateful commendation of the Chief Magistrate of the Union. If, gentlemen, you should ever come to Washington, let me only know that a member of the Wilmington Light Infantry is near me and I shall need no other introduction."

Upon the acceptance of the ladies' flag in 1853, your first

captain pledged you to attain the highest standard of your proud ancestry. Addressing the company and describing the then threatening aspect of public affairs, he said: "Comrades, if ever the day should come in our time, and I think it will, when you will be called to assert upon these sandy hills, already stained with your forefathers' blood, the principles they proclaimed at Mecklenburg, let the memories of this day float around your beautiful banner, and its glorious inscription. Let them nerve your arm, mingle in your shouts of victory or assuage the bitterness of your defeat."

That time did come. These bold, brave words were tested to their utmost, and I stand here to-day to say these promises were redeemed at Bentonville and Fort Fisher with your blood and a whole people's tears.

At midnight on the 15th of April, 1861, Gov. Ellis was aroused from his bed, and told of the bombardment of Sumter and the President's proclamation of war. He instantly determined to seize Forts Caswell and Johnston, and appointing your first captain, Adjutant General of the State *ad interim*, directed Graham Daves, his private Secretary, to draw and place in his hands for execution the proper orders. They were carried at once on a special car to Goldsboro, and thence telegraphed to John L. Cantwell, Colonel of the 30th militia regiment of the State. That officer was commanded to order the Wilmington Light Infantry, Capt. DeRosset, the German Volunteers, Capt. Cornelson, and the Wilmington Rifle Guards, Capt. Meares, to accompany him to the mouth of the river, and with them to seize and occupy the forts there, in the name of the State of North Carolina.

A revolutionary body, organized in Wilmington, in December, 1860, called the "The Cape Fear Minute Men," commanded by John J. Hedrick, Stephen D. Thruston, George Wortham and others, had some days previous to this time occupied these same forts without authority. A council of

safety, of which Stephen D. Wallace was Secretary, had also appeared in Wilmington.

On the 16th of April, the United States steamer "Uncle Ben," was seized at Wilmington by Adjutant General Cantwell, and her captain, (Greenwood,) and twelve men imprisoned at the Marine Hospital. S. L. Fremont, being assigned to her command, carried down to Fort Caswell supplies of powder, shot, shell, and gun carriages, received by rail road from Charleston. Upon the arrival of Fremont at Caswell, the Adjutant General resigned his appointment under the Governor, and re-entered the ranks of his company, the Wilmington Light Infantry, as a private. On the 15th of June, the company was united with nine others and formed the 18th Regiment of North Carolina Troops. James D. Radcliffe was elected Colonel, Oliver P. Meares, Lieutenant Colonel and George Tait, Major. The Wilmington Light Infantry now ceased to be known by that name. As company G of the 18th Regiment, its former organization was necessarily suspended during the war. On the 17th of March, 1875, the company was, by the survivors, formally re-organized, with the following officers: Matthew P. Taylor, Captain; A. L. DeRosset, First Lieutenant; Jno. C. James, Second Lieutenant; H. C. McQueen, Third Lieutenant; J. M. Cazaux, Ensign; Dr. G. G. Thomas, Surgeon; Rev. Geo. Patterson, Chaplain.

Capt. Taylor served until April 10th, 1877, when, by a singular coincidence, he was elected Major of the 3d Battalion State Guards; the same rank of his predecessor, Capt. DeRosset; but a new organization created by Act of the last General Assembly; upon which Mr. Walter Coney was elected captain, being the tenth in the line of succession to that rank since the foundation of the company. And this completes the history of the Wilmington Light Infantry to the present period.

I congratulate you, Capt. Coney, on the fine appearance and discipline of your command. I trust you will never find

the merchants and people of Wilmington, and especially the ladies, any less generous in their courtesy or less cordial in their attachment to your company than they were accustomed to be in your predecessors' days.

Brother soldiers, of the Veteran Corps, I have performed the duty assigned me, but I cannot conclude this address without acknowledging my own sense of its imperfections and omissions and regretting the necessity I am under of invoking your indulgence. I have not drawn upon your patience, however, I hope, without rewarding it by the recital of incidents I am sure you will not willingly suffer to pass with me into oblivion. I am constrained to omit many which are even more interesting. At the risk of being tedious, I shall now ask your attention while I detain you with an attempt to recall the brightest vision of our antebellum days. The blue eyed Dora Brown, the *vivandiere* of the Wilmington Light Infantry, as she appeared at the head of the company some years before the war, in her gay costume of green and gold—not yet entered on her teens—graceful as an houri; beaming with the vivacity of her age and family; the child of beauty and of song; a golden sunlight streaming in her hair and flashing from her eyes; she marched with the swinging gait and cadence of a veteran and the grace of a sylph. *La Fille du Regiment* still lives, but happier now, in the achievement of her destiny and the fulfilment of the duties of a more exalted station.*

Yet how often, on the tented fields of Virginia, fluttering above the white winged canvas, or toying in the breeze with the Stars and Bars; through the silent watches of the starlit night; pacing with the solitary sentinel, when that sentinel's beat marked the boundary lines of a Confederacy; on the prison floors and the bitter cold of Lake Erie; gleaming on the unsheathed bayonets of hostile columns moving to the fray; in long and cruel marches by the dark Potomac; over the sloppy roads; above ramparts crowned with cannon;

* Now Mrs. Gregory.

wreathed with the battle smoke or sheeted in its flame, that guileless little maiden's face has risen on the soldier's eye like some exhalation of the mist.

“As on the driving cloud the shiny bow,
That gracious thing made up of tears and light,
Mid' the wild rack and rain that slants below,
Stands smiling forth unmoved and freshly bright!
As though the spirits of all lovely flowers,
In weaving each its wreath and dewy crown,
Or e'er they sank to earth in vernal showers,
Had built a bridge to tempt the angels down.”

Gentlemen of the Veteran Corps, I am glad to see these recollections touch your sensibilities.

“These moistened eyes, these trembling lips
Are not the signs of doubt or fear!”

Survivors of more than forty battle fields, the memory of which will last while history shall last; the pages which record the conflicts of which they were the theatre make you the actors, and flame with the dauntless spirit of your ancestors. They register in your deeds the transmission of the heroism they inherited. That spirit still lives amidst the corruptions of this day and the degeneracy of the republic. Nay, more, it has the power even to reanimate its corpse.

Down amid the tropics, beneath the fervid skies of the equator, the aqueducts of Mexico arch her thirsty vales. From the mountains to the city, they carry on their shoulders to the humblest dwellings of the people the pure life-giving waters of the Sierra Madre. And so we should learn to regard this company and this organization. It comes down to us from the historic past; it links the present generation of our young men to their predecessors; our living heroes and our dead; our lowliest needs and our loftiest aspirations. Across a desert slough and a dark valley, crowded with shadows and death, it brings to Wilmington, through clouds and mists, fringed with the rainbow hues of morning and fed with heaven's own sunshine, over leaping cascades and difficult hills, the fresh pure air and the immortal breath of patriot-

ism. Soldiers, I do not ask you to-day to maintain your reputation, nor shall I repeat promises for your future conduct; your past history is the best guarantee of your future.

Fellow citizens, I make you no appeal in behalf of this company. It is as though a man should plead to a mother in behalf of her own offspring. Its sun will never set; its natural force will not abate until freedom itself shall expire. We shall not see it die until that living public spirit, which has characterized this community in every emergency of its existence, shall also disappear and forever.

At the conclusion of the oration, which was loudly applauded, the exercises were brought to a close by the choir singing "Carolina's Sons are Ready," composed by the Hon. Geo. Davis, and dedicated by him to the Wilmington Light Infantry, who were then on duty at Bolles' battery near Fort Fisher, in May, 1861.

[For this sketch and the preliminary account of the celebration our acknowledgments are due to Mr. J. T. James of the "Daily Review," in which paper it originally appeared. We present the oration with the author's last corrections.]

APPENDIX.

MR. WADDELL'S SPEECH.

Mr. Waddell, addressing Capt. Harrison, of the Oak City Guards, said :

I tender you, on behalf of the Wilmington Light Infantry, their sincere acknowledgments for the hearty welcome which has greeted their arrival in your beautiful city. The opportunity which your visit to Wilmington on the 20th of May last afforded them of forming an estimate of your characters, justified them in anticipating a warm reception and a generous hospitality, but they were scarcely prepared for such a greeting as this, conveyed too, through so distinguished a representative, and in such kind and flattering terms. The character of the man whose name your city bears, was alone a sufficient guarantee to us for the belief that in *her* citizen soldiers might be found a happy combination of the attributes of the soldier and the gentleman,—your visit to Wilmington confirmed that belief,—our welcome here to-day is a delightful realization of it.

In conferring upon her capital the name “Raleigh,” North Carolina has not only performed an act of justice and gratitude to the illustrious man who planted the first colony of Englishmen in America on her coast, but she is perpetuating the memory of one of the most gallant soldiers, most accomplished gentlemen, and most gifted scholars of the brightest

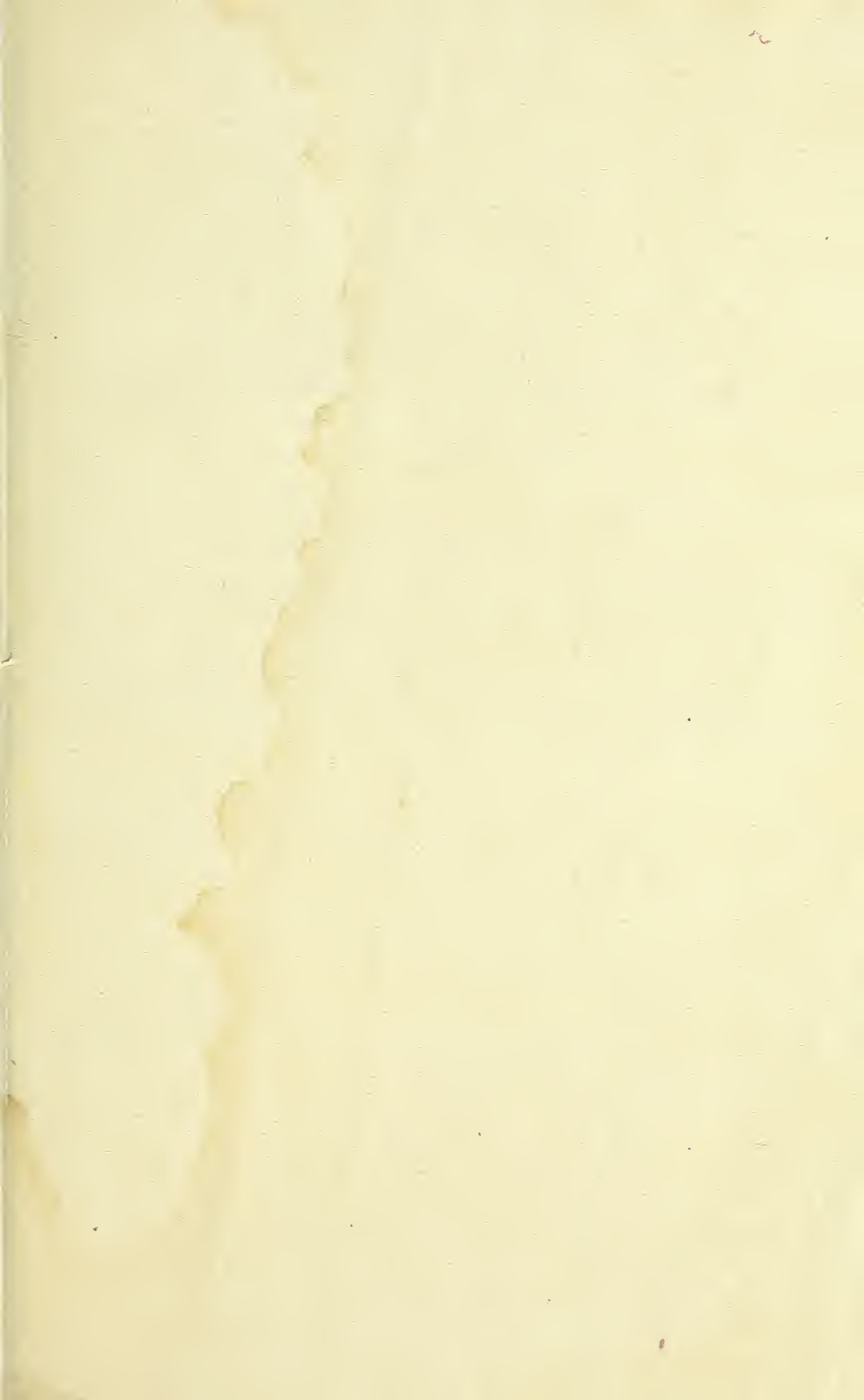
period of English history. 'Tis a name with which are associated the highest and noblest qualities of our nature; a name indissolubly connected with the history of our state, and which, until illumined by the pen of that distinguished son of North Carolina, (Dr. Hawks,) who is now weaving the web of her history, had never occupied its proper page in the records of our race. You, fellow soldiers, since your organization, have proved yourselves not unworthy "guards" to the City of Oaks; and emulation of the virtues and gallantry of the great man whose name it bears will be the best assurance you can give of your determination to maintain your present position.

Devoted as we profess ourselves as citizens to be to the cause of our whole country—to whatever concerns our national interest—our most entire loyalty is still due to our native state; and owing to the peculiar institutions among which we live, greater necessity is felt for the diffusion of military knowledge here at the South than elsewhere in America. All that is dear to us socially and politically, may depend upon our readiness and efficiency, at a moment's warning, to take the field.

The spirit which prompts these reciprocal visits of military companies is generous, manly and wise. While they expand our hearts beyond our immediate circles and teach us to embrace as brothers those who were strangers before, they have the greater and more salutary effect of stimulating military pride in our respective companies, and cultivating the science of tactics by devotion to the severe discipline of the camp. And I trust I may be pardoned here for doing an act of simple justice in ascribing to a gentleman of this city (Mr. Edward Cantwell) this meed of praise. On his return from a gallant and honorable career in Mexico, he organized the Wilmington Light Infantry—the only other corps then existing in North Carolina being that proud relic of Revolutionary times, the Independent Light Infantry of Fayetteville. To him are we indebted for a revival of the military spirit in North Carolina, and for the pleasures of this occasion. Long may

his services and patriotism continue a source of pride to his fellow citizens.

I should but poorly represent my comrades of the Wilmington Light Infantry, and do but scant justice to my own feelings of gallantry, were I to omit an allusion to the fairer portion of your community, of whom the Governor has spoken in such playful and handsome terms. Do not be shocked, gentlemen, when I say that the inclement weather which has driven them to the capitol yonder ought to be a source of gratitude to our captain. It is nevertheless true. The exhaustion which his men have suffered from the broadsides of the batteries in Fayetteville render it utterly impossible that they could stand another attack so soon. With one day's rest however they are willing to encounter the fire again, and if any should fall we only ask that they may be carried from the field in the arms of their foes.



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